

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, AS

SUBJ: SNEDDEN'S POPULARITY RISES / PROSPECT OF EARLY
AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS DIMS

1. GALLUP POLL PUBLISHED IN JANUARY 19, 1974 EDITION
OF THE BULLETIN MAGAZINE, SHOWS DRAMATIC RISE IN PERSONAL
POPULARITY OF OPPOSITION LEADER BILLY SNEDDEN, POLL TAKEN
IN MID-DECEMBER SHORTLY AFTER REFERENDA ON PRICES/INCOMES
WERE DEFEATED IN NATIONAL VOTE. SNEDDEN'S POPULARITY
INCREASED FROM 29 TO 46 PERCENT AMONG 2000 PERSONS ASKED.
HIGHEST PREVIOUS SHOWING IN PAST SIX MONTHS BY SNEDDEN IN
POLL WAS 38 PERCENT. PM WHITLAM ALSO CONTINUES TO BE
POPULAR DESPITE DROP FROM 48 TO 45 PERCENT IN SAME PERIOD.

2. IN SAME POLL, LABOR-COUNTRY PARTY RECEIVED PREFERENCE
OVER ALP. L-CP PERCENTAGE REPORTEDLY HAS STEADILY INCREASED
OVER PAST SIX MONTHS FROM 45 PERCENT TO CURRENT 50 PERCENT,
WHILE ALP POPULARITY HAS DECLINED FROM 46 TO 43 PERCENT.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WHITLAM'S PERSONAL POPULARITY REMAINS
FAIRLY STEADY, INCREASE IN APPROVAL OF SNEDDEN AND
CONTINUED TREND OF POLLS IN FAVOR OF OPPOSITION WOULD SEEN
TO MILITATE AGAINST EARLY ELECTIONS BEING CALLED BY PRIME
MINISTER, A DECISION WHICH WILL DEPEND PARTLY UPON PM'S
RATHER SPECIAL PERSONALITY. LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY NATIONAL
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ELECTIONS IS A FAVORITE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION AND WILL BE

THE CENTRAL ISSUE AS PARLIAMENT RECONVENES END FEBRUARY.
SOME POLITICAL COMMENTATORS NOW FEEL THAT GOVERNMENT WILL
NOT CALL ELECTIONS IN FACE OF NEGATIVE OPINION POLLS, AND
THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL BE UNABLE TO AGREE UPON BLOCKING
APPROPRIATIONS IN ORDER TO FORCE ELECTION. OUTCOME WOULD
BE SERIES OF COMPROMISES UPON ALP LEGISLATION AND POSTPONEMENT
OF ELECTIONS UNTIL 1975. NOTE LIBERALS, COUNTRY PARTY AND
DLP MUST VOTE TOGETHER IN SENATE TO BLOCK ALP, AND
GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN SOME ABILITY TO PICK OFF ONE OR
ANOTHER OF THESE PARTIES ON PARTICULAR ISSUES.

4. SNEDDEN'S IMPROVED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE IN OPPOSING
PRICES/INCOMES REFERENDA (WHICH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DEFEATED)
HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON HIS POLITICAL IMAGE, ALTHOUGH
THIS MAY BE TEMPORARY. LIBERAL SOURCE STATES PARTY HAS
DECIDED TO SPEND GOOD DEAL OF MONEY, INCLUDING RECOURSE TO
PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM, TO "TAKE SNEDDEN APART AND PUT HIM BACK
TOGETHER AGAIN" IN ATTEMPT MAKE HIM ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATE
PRIME MINISTER. WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THIS HAD ALREADY BEEN
TRIED WITH FORMER PM MCMAHON, SOURCE INDICATED LIBERALS
HAVE FEW ALTERNATIVES TO SNEDDEN AT PRESENT TIME.
END COMMENT.
HARROP

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